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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on school superintendents--those currently in the position and those in the pipeline. The report reaffirms the importance of the superintendency, raises concerns about the lack of national data collection on school superintendents, and concludes that Americans need more demographic information about, and increased understanding of, the role of the superintendent. The report opens by criticizing the lack of information that has been generated on superintendents and proceeds to supply details on those who hold this position. It looks at the proportion of women in the job, as well as the race and the age of the job holders. The report discusses how long superintendents stay in the job, longer than the news media suggest, and how much they earn. The report explores the routes to the superintendency and looks at the pool of potential candidates for the position, which includes assistant superintendents, central-office administrators, and principals. The makeup of this pool reflects promising diversity in gender and race, although there is almost a total lack of Asian Americans in the pool. Another feature of this pool of potential superintendents is that secondary school principals are much more likely to become superintendents than are elementary school principals. (Contains 16 references.) (RJM)

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THE U.S. SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

A Report
by
Harold L. Hodgkinson, Ed.D. and Xenia Montenegro, Ph.D.

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Superintendents Prepared, an urban leadership consortium of three Washington, D.C.-based organizations — *the Institute for Educational Leadership, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and The McKenzie Group, Inc.* — was created in 1991 to broaden and diversify the pipeline of prospective education chief executive officers. Support from the Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Prudential Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Citibank enabled the Consortium's development of an applied, experiential training approach serving highly skilled individuals who are diverse in terms of geography, race/ethnicity and gender.

Superintendents Prepared provides a year-long leadership development opportunity for individuals who aspire to the superintendency of an urban/large school district, including those serving already as superintendents in smaller districts. Persons selected to participate in the Program are recruited primarily from the field of education. However, a small number of individuals with non-education backgrounds (e.g., business, the military and law) have also participated. To date, *Superintendents Prepared* has trained 106 individuals and created a larger and more diverse pool of candidates for school superintendencies. Twenty-five percent of the participants have obtained their first superintendencies in school districts across the nation, including Columbus (OH), Community School District #7, Bronx (NY), Detroit (MI), Harrisburg (PA), Madison (WI), Rochester (NY), San Jose (CA), and Santa Fe (NM). *Superintendents Prepared* graduates have moved impressively into major education leadership positions across the nation and continue to work diligently from diverse vantage points to improve outcomes for students.

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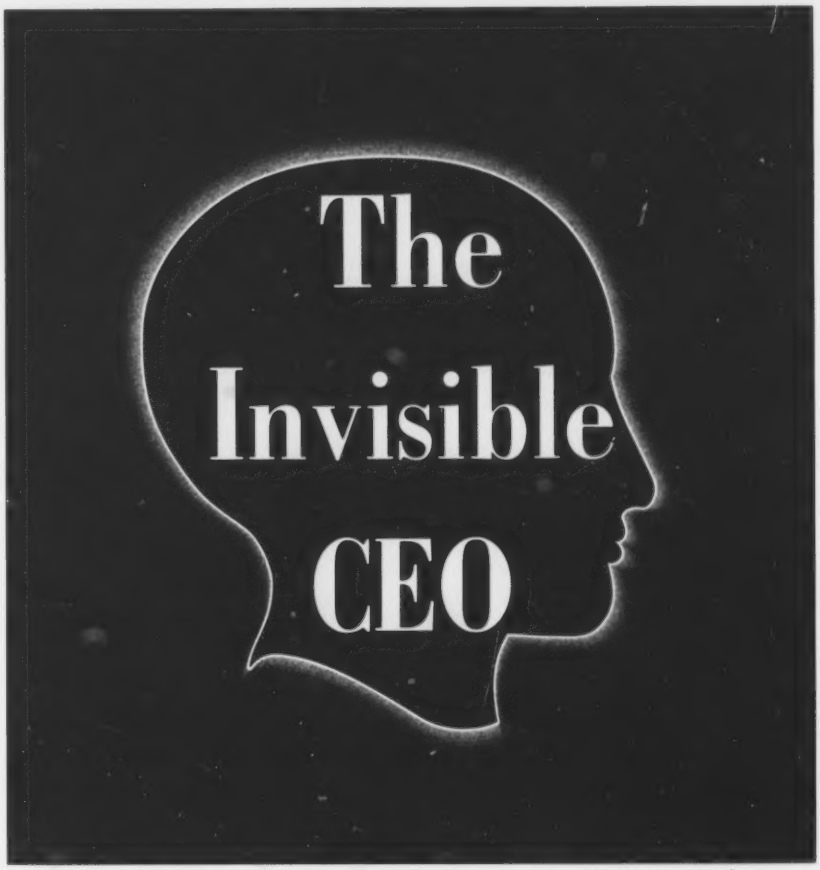

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FOREWORD

Our nation's future is inextricably tied to the success of children in the public schools. The individual ultimately responsible for the teaching and learning process and student outcomes is the local school superintendent. However, many citizens neither know that the local school superintendent plays a key role nor understand the importance of his/her role.

The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. These leaders must have a constantly expanding inventory of skills and capacities and must be able to use these to deal with the complexities of the education enterprise, as well as with the challenges of today's political realities, economic constraints and turbulent social problems. The tenure of many superintendents, particularly those serving in large or urban districts, is often short and/or tumultuous. This can be attributed to a range of factors including conflicts with school boards, city councils or mayors, or community pressure for improved academic outcomes.

Traditional pathways to the superintendency do not always adequately equip education leaders to tackle the daunting challenges facing the nation's schools. In order to meet the school leadership challenges of today and tomorrow, policymakers, practitioners, and community members at the national, state, and local levels must pay serious attention to the local school superintendent — those currently serving in the role, as well as the pipeline, those who will serve in the role in the future. It is imperative that our nation develop and sustain high-quality chief executive officers for education who reflect the gender and racial realities of our increasingly diverse society.

The report that follows, a special project of *Superintendents Prepared*, is designed to focus attention on the local school superintendent — those in the position and those in the pipeline. The report reaffirms the strategic importance of the superintendency, raises concerns about the lack of national data collection on school superintendents, and concludes with the conviction that Americans need more demographic information about and increased understanding of the role of one of the nation's most important jobs — the local school superintendent.

The Consortium collaborated in this initiative with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) because of its unique leadership role with school administrators across the nation, and because of its commitment to and earlier research on these issues. Since the 1920's, AASA has commissioned a study on the superintendency every ten years (with a lapse in the 1940's during the height of World War II). During her tenure as Associate Executive Director of AASA, the late Effie Jones provided the leadership in the publication of several reports focused on women and minorities in school administration. It is our hope that this report not only continues AASA's work in this realm, but also raises additional questions that will help to sharpen the larger society's focus on the superintendency.

Many individuals and organizations helped the *Superintendents Prepared* Consortium produce this report. First, I want to express thanks to the Consortium members: Betty Hale, Vice President, Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL); Floretta Dukes McKenzie, Chairwoman

and CEO, The McKenzie Group, Inc.; Margaret Simms, Vice President for Research Programs, The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Denise Slaughter, Senior Program Associate, *Superintendents Prepared*, IEL; Michael D. Usdan, President, IEL; and Eddie N. Williams, President, The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Members of the Consortium and I extend a very special thanks to the co-authors of the report, Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson and Xenia Montenegro. We want to particularly thank Paul D. Houston, Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators and the executives of the state associations who took time from busy schedules to respond to our survey, and Gordon Ambach, Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers, and the chief state school officers across the country who likewise responded to the survey. In addition, we want to thank the members of IEL's many networks who helped ensure that the surveys were completed and returned in a timely manner. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the members of our Superintendents Demographic Study Advisory Committee for their invaluable input and support of our efforts. Finally, we express appreciation to the Ford Foundation which provided the financial resources for the report.

This report is designed to project the crucial role of the superintendency to the forefront of the nation's education agenda. We hope that both educators and laypersons alike will respond to our call to action: to focus more attention on superintendents — those in the position and those in the pipeline.

Barbara McCloud, Ph.D.
Director
Superintendents Prepared

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to record their gratitude to the staff of *Superintendents Prepared* for their work in helping conceptualize this work and the surveys, getting the questionnaires edited, printed and processed, as well as their helpful comments on the first draft; the members of our Advisory Committee for helping us to get the project started and for commenting on the manuscript; to Michael D. Usdan, President of the Institute for Educational Leadership for his overall support as well as his careful reading of the manuscript; to the Ford Foundation for providing the resources needed to complete the project.

In addition to acknowledging this support, errors of fact and/or interpretation remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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THE U.S. SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT: THE INVISIBLE CEO

By
Harold Hodgkinson and Xenia Montenegro

INTRODUCTION

We know less about school superintendents than about any other set of chief executives in the nation. College and university presidents? Every year they are analyzed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Fortune 500 CEOs? They're all in the Conference Board Reports, as well as many other places. Foundation presidents, military and religious leaders, mayors and governors — thousands of leaders of every conceivable kind of organization are available on an updated basis from some reliable source — except superintendents of schools. There are many fine descriptive studies of the problems of superintendents, the skills they need, their relationships with boards, their changing roles, etc. (e.g. Carter and Cunningham, 1997). But these are mainly descriptions of the *superintendency, not the superintendents.* The intent of this report is to examine and provide factual data to influential lay as well as professional audiences on this critical position of leadership and its pipeline, especially in relation to the rapidly changing demographics of students served and the challenges facing our schools.

While the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has conducted a sample survey each decade since the 1920's (Glass, 1992), the necessary large scale survey research on a more regular basis has not been undertaken. In consulting the statistical Bible of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *The Condition of Education, 1998,* there is no mention of superintendents in any one of its over 300 charts and tables. The 1996 *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) provides, and will continue to provide, excellent national data on teachers and school principals for both public and non-public schools — but not a single mention of superintendents. Non-public school heads are included in part because of consistent pressure put on the U.S. Department of Education to describe their institutions in useful ways, but not the chief administrators of *public* schools, individuals who are responsible for 88 percent of all students, whereas private schools enroll only 12 percent of students.

It is possible that the several education reform movements of the last decade or so have targeted "the education establishment" as the enemy of change, and thus to be ignored or gotten around, rather than as school leaders whose support will be absolutely crucial to the implementation of any school reform proposal. Certainly without school boards' and superintendents' active support, most reforms will end in failure. Yet in both the governors summit (led by President Bush) and the business leaders summit (organized by IBM) involving education reform, the key players in schools were conspicuous by their absence. Even as devolution allows more action at the school building level, the ultimate *accountability* for the school system must rest with the superintendent and board. The largest school systems run operations larger than many corpora-

tions — food and transportation services, library/information, equipment purchasing, counseling, school construction/renovation, finance management, community and public relations, athletics, arts, health services, personnel — the list is long. If something goes wrong with any of these areas, the buck almost always stops at the superintendent's desk, regardless of devolution. In virtually every city and county in the nation, education is the largest item in the local budget. For these and other reasons, we need the most highly qualified and skilled people in the superintendency to confront the host of urgent problems besieging American education.

We know that talent and skill can be found in all segments of society, and we need to ensure that women and minorities are coming through the education "pipeline" in proportion to their talents, skills and motivations. Thirty-three percent of public school students are now "minority." In 2025 there will be no "majority" as white students drop below half, and in about 2050 half of all Americans will be something other than non-Hispanic white. As the student population becomes more diverse, we will need more diversity in the superintendency.

We need a regular, professionally staffed and reported survey of both the people in the superintendency *and* an analysis of the pool from which future superintendents will be selected. Once a decade is not often enough. The federal education department is tasked to report regularly on the condition of American education. Such reports would almost by definition have to include information on the people who function as the CEOs of our schools. It is crystal clear to the authors that the National Center for Education Statistics needs to add data on the superintendents of schools to its *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) data base to fulfill its mission.

What follows is not that report, but an attempt to answer some basic questions about the contemporary superintendent, as well as those who are in the pipeline for the position. Much can be learned from looking at the studies that have been done, both to learn more about the people in the superintendency and about the future of both the job and the incumbent. More importantly, this report provides the most recent data from a research study conducted by the *Superintendents Prepared Consortium*, in collaboration with the American Association of School Administrators. The research study includes two surveys conducted in 1998. One survey collected data on the gender, race, and geographic location of school superintendents from the Chief State School Officers in state departments of education throughout the country. Another survey obtained a snapshot of routes to the superintendency, tenure, hiring and retention, the pool of future superintendents, major challenges, and development and training issues from state executives affiliated with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). (We will also refer to earlier studies of superintendents by Thomas Glass, Effie Jones, and Xenia Montenegro.) Although the 1998 surveys did not have the high response rate we would have liked and, thus, have inherent limitations, the data collected do provide valuable current information on the superintendency.

We can start with some basic questions, try to answer them using currently available data, and then reach some conclusions about what issues and concerns are most critical, about what can and should be done, and by whom.

WHO IS A "SUPERINTENDENT?"

A school superintendent leads a school district, which comes in several shapes and sizes. Almost all of the local school superintendents in this country are hired by a local board of education. Superintendents are charged with the responsibility of ensuring an effective teaching and learning process, as well as with the oversight of the financial, legal, and personnel operations aspects of the system. Some superintendents lead *county* school systems; some are *district* superintendents. Some are superintendents of *city* systems. There are *state* superintendents of public instruction. Many small districts employ a combination manager who functions as principal/superintendent. Glass (1992) suggests that many small districts have only the superintendent and one other officer in the central office. It is clear that the school consolidation movement, reducing school districts from more than 100,000 to about 15,000, has not eliminated the very small district with fewer than 600 students.

Glass suggests about 6,000 very small districts, while the Texas Research League described a large number of districts with fewer than 100 students in 1994. With student population declines in many heartland school districts and large increases in many southeast and western districts (often the same students cause both trends, as they and their families move from Midwest to southeast and southwest suburbs), large districts are getting bigger and small ones are staying small. Added to size should be population density — 14 counties in Kansas have a population density of only 6 people per square mile, the density of the Gobi desert. Such densities are quite common west of a line straight south from the western edge of Minnesota. "Low density" superintendents have major logistical problems in just getting students to school, much less arranging parent conferences. Although the superintendent's responsibilities will vary as we have suggested, that person remains the accountable executive for that district, county, city or state. Of the approximately 15,000 school districts in the nation, virtually all have a chief executive officer, probably called the superintendent. (This ambiguity comes from the fact that the AASA survey for the 1990's (Glass, 1992) was done on a survey sample of only 12 percent of superintendents.)

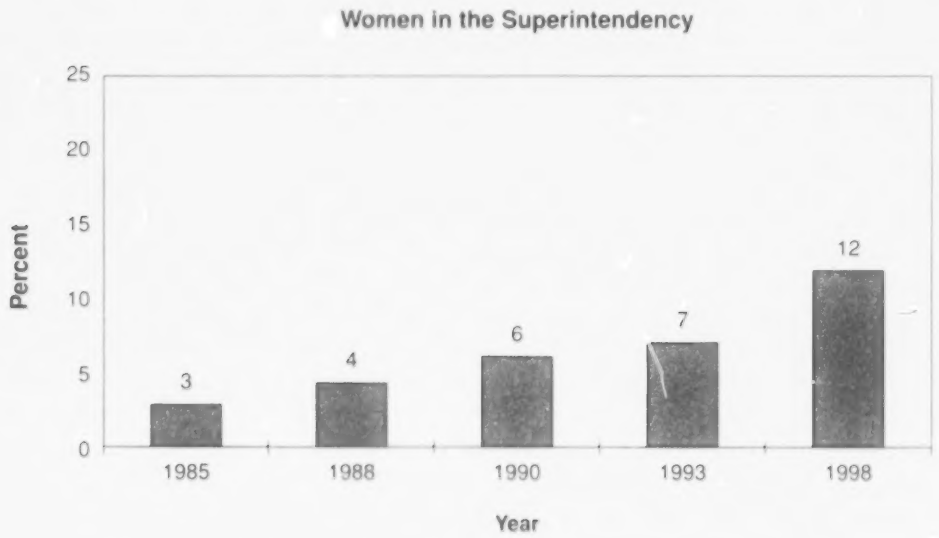
WHAT ARE THEIR PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS?

Gender

Even without any surveys, it is apparent to those familiar with school systems that superintendents are overwhelmingly male. Most studies before 1998 reported that male superintendents comprised more than 90 percent of the total, even though they may come from the school principalship, which according to SASS was 34.5 percent female in 1993-94. Glass reports 6.6 percent female superintendents in 1992, while Montenegro (1993) with a larger sample of 12,513 superintendents, finds 7.1 percent in 1993.

The 1998 study by *Superintendents Prepared* shows that 12 percent of superintendents are women. This percentage is based on a sample of 9,100. The data were gathered through a survey

of the Chief State School Officers, the same method used by Montenegro in 1993. To be sure, there have been increases through the years, with 4 percent female superintendents in 1988, 7 percent in 1993, and currently 12 percent. Still, the incremental increases are small.[1]



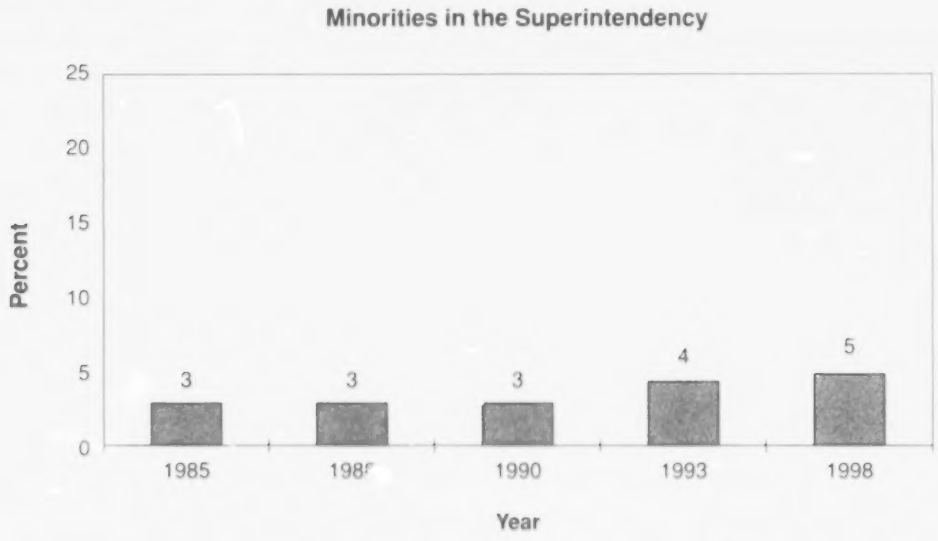
There are 6602 superintendents in the *Superintendents Prepared* sample that have data both on gender and urbanicity. An analysis of this sample shows that there is a better representation of women superintendents in suburban areas (14%) and in urban areas (11%), than in rural school districts, where women superintendents comprise 9 percent of the total. Glass also reports an increase in women superintendents in large districts since 1982, although it still represents small numbers.

There are some regional differences in women's representation, and these range from a low of six percent to a high of 22 percent. Similar to Montenegro's 1993 data, the regions with the highest representation of women in the superintendency are the Pacific and New England, followed by the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions. The rest of the regions have the lowest representation of women.

[1] The Appendix provides more detail on the methodology for the gender and race survey by *Superintendents Prepared*.

Race

Besides being predominantly male, the overwhelming majority of superintendents are also of the Caucasian race. Just as in private sector board rooms all over America, the white male heads the great majority of school districts around the country. The 1998 *Superintendents Prepared* gender and race survey, with a sample of 8,029 superintendents with racial data, shows that about five percent of superintendents are minorities. This compares with four percent in 1993 as reported by Montenegro.



Although with such a small sample one has to be cautious in interpreting the data region by region, it appears that the East South Central region has the most representation of minority superintendents at 10 percent, followed by the South Atlantic (8 percent), and the West South Central region (7 percent). Representation in other regions was dismal, at one or two percent minority. The breakout by minority group is two percent black and two percent Hispanic, one percent American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo, and less than a half percent Asian or Pacific Islander.

By location, urban areas with six percent representation and suburban areas with five percent representation of minorities edge out rural areas with a three percent representation of minorities. This is based on a sample of 4,249 superintendents with data on race and urbanicity. Although this sample is small, the results are consistent with Glass in 1992, reporting that 15.3 percent of superintendents with 25,000 pupils or more in their districts were minority, while only two percent of superintendents are minority in the smallest school districts with under 300 pupils. It must be kept in mind that very few school districts have 25,000 or more students.

Age

The *Superintendents Prepared* survey of state executives on school superintendents found that state executives estimate that more than half of superintendents they know are between 50 and 59 years old. The second largest segment is between the ages of 40 to 49 years.[2] This information corroborated Glass' finding in 1992.

Half of all superintendents in Glass' sample were between 46 and 55 years old. Very few were under 40 or over 60. The median age was 50. It takes a certain number of years to move "through the chairs" from teacher (starting at about 23) to principal (28 years) to perhaps a central office job at 33 and a superintendency at 40, according to Glass. The superintendent's age does not seem to vary by size of district.

[2] The Appendix provides more detail on the methodology for this survey by *Superintendents Prepared.*

HOW LONG DO THEY STAY AND HOW MUCH DO THEY EARN?

The folklore in education (largely based on what's been observed in highly troubled and visible urban districts) has it that superintendents only survive for about three years. Results from the *Superintendents Prepared* survey of state executives' perceptions point to an average tenure of five years. Glass, in 1992, suggested that the average length in office is 6.4 years — the average contract being three years.

The shortest tenure reported by the state executives in the *Superintendents Prepared* survey is one month, while the longest tenure is at 57 years. The longest staying superintendent is reportedly someone who had started in his twenties, obtained job tenure, and is still serving way past retirement age. The average for shortest tenure reported by the state executives is 1.3 years, and the average for longest tenure is 24.5 years.

The majority of state executives in the *Superintendents Prepared* study note that the short tenure did not create any special problems with leadership in their respective states. Those who report that it did pose problems mentioned a variety of them: "raises questions in legislature about competencies of superintendents," "reinforces belief that Board of Education does not provide adequate support for superintendents," "fewer applicants," "lack of public confidence," "adds to conflict issue," "lack of team building with board," "lack of stability in a school division and costly." Meanwhile, only one state executive in the study indicated that the long tenure presented special problems with leadership in their state.

The state executives also report that just slightly less than half of the superintendents are in their first superintendency, while the majority have been superintendents one or more times in the past. In Glass' report, 56 percent of them are in their first superintendency while 44 percent have held at least one other before assuming their present job.

Superintendents are not migratory, various data sources suggest. According to the state executives' average estimates from the *Superintendents Prepared* survey, only 15 percent are from out of state while 85 percent are from their state. This is uncannily close to Glass' estimate of 87 percent who stay in one state for their entire career. Superintendents in large cities and the more affluent suburban districts, however, commonly are recruited nationally and across state boundaries.

There are little data on salaries, but Glass did report a range with a concentration around $40,000 in 1992. However, 70 percent of superintendents in the largest districts of more than 25,000 students made over $68,999, exclusive of fringes, while only 36 percent in school districts with 3,000 to 25,000 students made salaries at this level. Less than one percent of superintendents with under 300 students earned this salary. Meanwhile, the 1998 Statistical Abstract of the United States reports that superintendents of schools have an average contract salary of $98,106 in 1997, secondary principals $72,410 and public school teachers $39,580. However, as teacher salaries have improved, as well as those of senior office staff, the economic advantage of being a superintendent may be declining slightly. Although there are no national data, it would seem that

the "perks" of superintendents, compared to college presidents (car, house, large entertainment allowance, tuition benefits for children, etc.) or corporate CEOs (stock options, deferred compensation, corporate jet, entertainment, performance bonuses) leave much to be desired. In addition, the demands made on every minute of the superintendent's time, seven days every week, suggest that they may be actually underpaid at least in terms of hours worked.

WHAT ARE THE ROUTES TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY?

According to the state executives in the *Superintendents Prepared* study, there is only one path to the superintendency. This is the traditional path exemplified by teacher to principal to central office administrator to superintendent. This path, especially in larger school districts, usually includes a stint as a deputy, associate, or assistant superintendent. The state executives count very few superintendents, or less than one percent, who may have followed non-traditional paths from positions in business, the military, as consultants, or other jobs.

Actually, two primary traditional paths have been reported in the literature: teacher > principal > superintendent, and teacher > principal > central office administrator > superintendent. In both paths, a principalship was a step toward the superintendency for over three-fourths of all superintendents. (On the other hand, most principals don't become superintendents.) An older study at the University of Texas in 1987 (Burnham, undated) indicated that superintendents who were nominated as "effective" in her survey were those who had traveled the extra step of a high level position in central administration after the principalship. Outside of the Jones and Montenegro surveys, there is little national data on central administration staffs — their number and kinds of jobs, age, gender, race and other characteristics. Neither is there much that can be found on assistant superintendents.

One should not forget either that getting the first superintendency is the toughest part, no matter what route is taken. As mentioned earlier in this report, Glass and the results of the *Superintendents Prepared* state executives survey suggest that about half of superintendents come from another superintendency. Those trying to get their first superintendency face tough competition from already entrenched superintendents, usually from the same state, who often move around the way we occupy musical chairs. Since, as noted earlier, most are in their forties or fifties, very few spots open up due to retirement.

One can also argue that the route to the superintendency is not always a financially attractive one. As noted earlier (Statistical Abstract of the US, 1998), the average teacher's salary in 1997 was $39,580. Secondary principals on average made $72,410, while superintendents had an average salary of $98,106. A teacher would gain more financially by becoming a principal (with a "net gain" of $32,830) than a principal (with a "net gain" of $25,696) would by becoming a superintendent! Indeed, for a good teacher, the principalship at either the elementary or secondary level provides (1) a new set of administrative challenges, (2) significant increase in financial rewards, (3) continued contact with students and curriculum issues, (4) focus on one school which is more motivating for many than spreading one's energies over many groups and tasks, playing school

board and community level politics, and other things superintendents must do that principals don't, and (5) the ability to control most of what one is accountable for, while superintendents are often accountable for things they do not control.

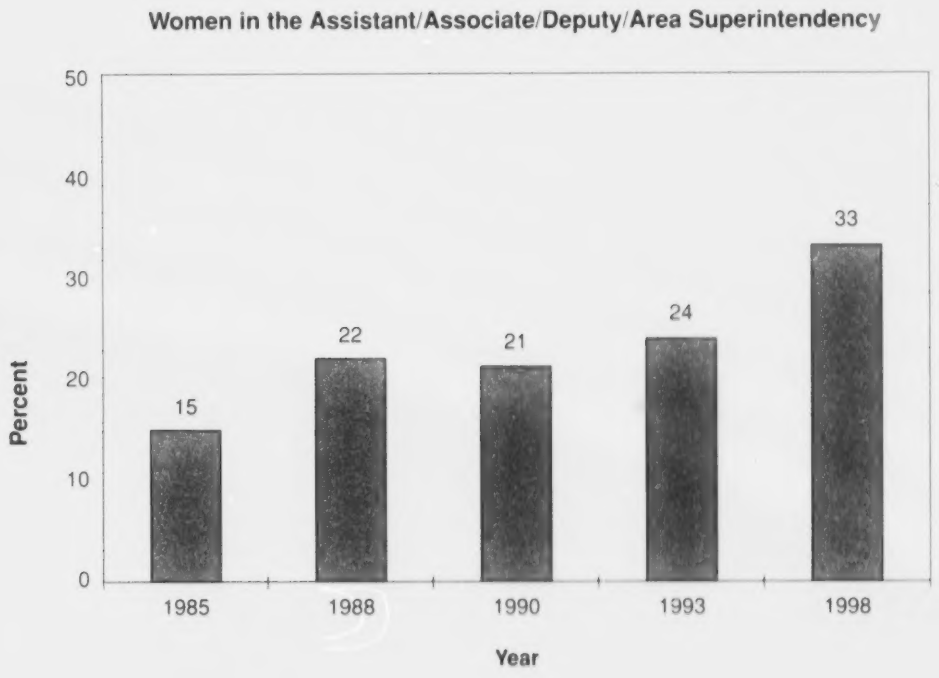
WHERE DO WE SEARCH FOR SUPERINTENDENTS?

Considerable attention needs to be paid to the "pool" — the categories of places from which superintendents are usually selected — particularly as this is where three-fourths of superintendents come from. First, Glass finds that 64 percent of his sample were selected from outside the district that hired them as superintendent; only 36 percent were hired from the *local district pool*, most came from the *state pool*, and some from the *national pool*. One of the distinctions Paul Houston, Executive Director of AASA makes in describing future superintendents is between the "Wannabes" and the "Ought-abees" in these pools. In his view, there are many people preparing for the superintendency who might be better off in other roles, and many excellent candidates who have no interest in the job. (As the poet Yeats put it, "The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity.") Glass and Carter/Cunningham both feel that much more needs to be done to improve the quality of administrative training and certification programs in higher education, but neither have many suggestions as to (1) how to get more good people in the "pool," and (2) how to divert the dedicated but less than competent to other lines of work. On the other hand, there are some success stories like *Superintendents Prepared* and the Urban Superintendents Program at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, which increase the chances that qualified individuals, including women and minorities, will be selected by bringing them into the pool for consideration.

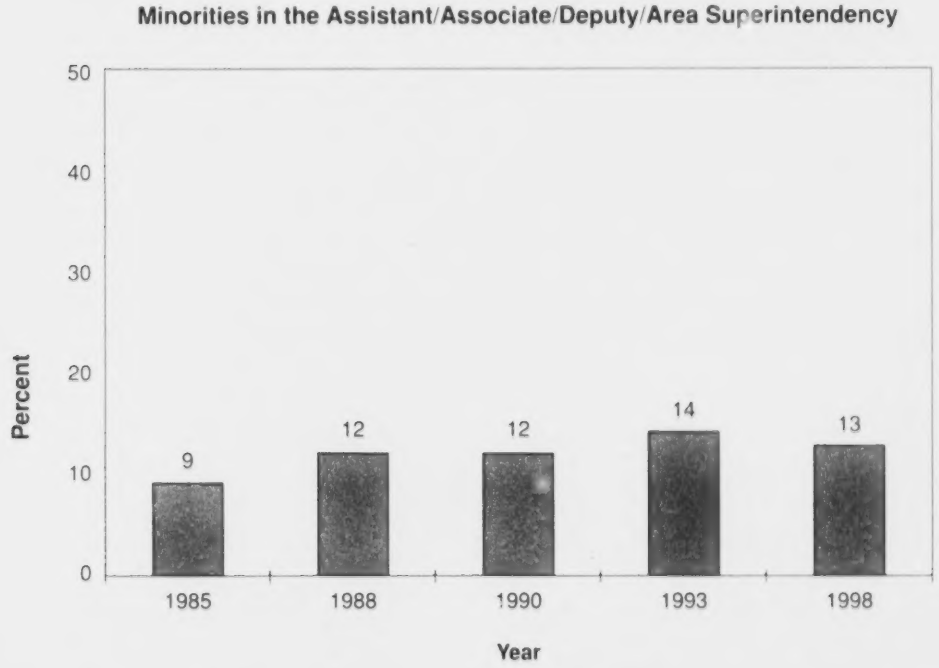
As far as gender and race are concerned, it is encouraging to note from the *Superintendents Prepared* gender and race survey that there is greater diversity in the pipeline, from the assistant superintendency to central office administration to the principalship, from which to draw superintendents. On the other hand, while the representation of women in all these positions has increased, the representation of minorities has hardly budged, if at all.

Assistant/Associate/Deputy/Area Superintendents

The *Superintendents Prepared* study on race and gender asked about assistant/associate/deputy/area superintendents. Women, it was found, occupy a more sizable proportion of these positions at 33 percent, based on a sample of 4,960 in 32 states. This compares with 24 percent reported by Montenegro in 1993.



Minorities, on the other hand, comprise 13 percent of these positions, based on a sample of 4,354 in 30 states. This does not show progress from 14 percent in 1993.



The minority breakdown in these positions is as follows:

American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo	0.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4%
Black	8.1%
Hispanic	4.0%
Total Minority	12.9%

Central Office Administrators

The representation of women in central office administration (such as curriculum/evaluation directors, etc.) actually surpasses that of men, at 57 percent. This is based on a sample of 28,510 central office administrators in 30 states. In 1993, the AASA-sponsored study by Montenegro reports female representation at 41 percent.

Minority representation is higher than in the superintendency, at 14 percent, based on 26,875 central office administrators in 27 states. This compares favorably with the 9 percent figure reported in 1993.

Below is a breakdown of minority groups in central office administration as obtained from the *Superintendents Prepared* race and gender survey:

American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo	0.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2%
Black	8.1%
Hispanic	4.5%
Total Minority	14.3%

Principals

In the principalship, female representation is at 20 percent among secondary school principals (sample of 11,828 from 31 states), 32 percent among middle school principals (sample of 8,062 from 27 states), and majority representation at 53 percent among elementary school principals (sample of 27,440 from 30 states). Overall female representation based on these numbers is 41 percent.

Certainly, we must note again the limitations of the data gathered from the *Superintendents Prepared* survey. For example, the principal positions reported are not always consistent, because the grade levels defined by school districts as secondary, middle, or elementary may vary. In some school districts there are no middle schools at all. However, these are the only current data on principals that categorize grade levels.

The representation of women in all levels of the principalship has increased, but the pattern of representation according to level remains. That is, there is a lower proportion of women in

the secondary school principalship as noted above. SASS and Montenegro in 1993 agreed that 34 percent of principals were female, but Montenegro points out that 40 percent of *elementary* principals were female, in contrast with only 16 percent of secondary principals.

The *Superintendents Prepared* state executives survey also confirms what has long been suspected: secondary principals are much more likely to become superintendents than elementary principals. State executives estimate that the superintendents they know in their states were either superintendents before they assumed their current position, or assistant superintendents, or secondary school principals, in that order. Secondary school principals in fact outrank central office administrators in being appointed to the superintendency, in the perception of state executives. In larger urban and suburban districts, however, we think that central office experience is usually a prerequisite to the superintendency.

Similar to the pattern in female representation, minorities total 13 percent among secondary school principals (sample of 10,879 from 29 states), 17 percent among middle school principals (sample of 7,474 from 25 states), and the same percentage among elementary school principals (sample of 25,578 from 28 states). It is disheartening that there has been no increase in racial minority representation in the secondary school principalship. Montenegro reported the same percentage (13%) in 1993. At the elementary level, it was 16 percent in 1993.

The *Superintendents Prepared* gender and race survey obtained the following distribution of principals at various levels by minority group:

	Secondary	Middle	Elementary
American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.6%	0.9%
Black	8.0%	10.5%	10.3%
Hispanic	3.5%	5.2%	5.7%
Total Minority	12.5%	16.8%	17.4%

One of the characteristics of the "pool" (the pipeline of individuals likely to assume superintendencies), which particularly catches the author's attention, is the almost total absence of Asian Americans, many of whom possess an almost reverential appreciation for education. In Japan, teachers at almost any level command great respect. But when Asians move to America, the idea that their children should aspire to become an "education CEO," much less a teacher, seems to have little or no appeal. Many Hispanics, we feel, also revere and respect teachers as authority figures, but certainly don't seem to push their children toward educational administration, nor toward public school teaching. As we mentioned earlier, by 2025 at the latest, white students will become a minority in our public schools, due to declining white fertility rates as well as large numbers of immigrants from Asia and south and central America. (Black immigration rates are very low.) By 2050, there will be no ethnic "majority" among US citizens of any age, and inter-ethnic political coalitions will be the order of the day, as they are now in most cities. We will all be "minorities."

While many "pools" will be affected, public schools may be among the most stressed. As of 1993, 34 percent of US public school students were minority (NSBA, 1995) while 22.7 percent of all students in higher education were minority (The Condition of Education, 1998). Ten percent of secondary school teachers were minority in 1993-94, while 14 percent of K-6 teachers were minority and 16 percent of public school principals were minority (SASS, 1993-94). Informal estimates are that by 2010, only three percent of public school teachers will be minority. (No such estimates are available for principals and superintendents, but current research show that there are minimal increases at best). Given that the "pool" is overwhelmingly people with teaching experience, a cut-back in teacher diversity would mean that the "pipeline" for superintendents could easily become virtually all white even as student enrollments approach a "minority majority" around 2025. This is true to a lesser degree for principals as well, although elementary schools are likely to see an increase in female principals, and hopefully minority as well. (That is why it is important to look at whether or not elementary school principals are excluded from the superintendency.)

One of the major reasons for the small percentage of professional minorities in the entire public education enterprise concerns the fact that we are now undergoing the second largest wave of immigration of this Century. Although the 1900-1915 wave was almost 90 percent European, the 1975-1995 wave is 85 percent non-European, mainly from Asia and south and central America. Children of immigrants who are upwardly mobile and are the first in their family to take advantage of higher education almost always move toward careers in business and the professions with both visible status and large financial rewards, the two major ways of "keeping score." The *grandchildren*, however, may look at a variety of careers including ministry, public service, education and other "helping" professions.

Because immigrants are such a major source of American population growth (the white TFR, or total fertility rate over a woman's lifetime, is now only 1.7 children, below the replacement level) the major reason our population is not declining, as is happening in Germany, Italy and Russia, and in Japan in 2006, is our amazing ability to absorb large immigrant numbers and bring out their best efforts and qualities. (Although Turks are now one of every five Germans, only one has ever been elected to the Bundt.) Thus, it may take considerable time to enlarge the superintendency pool. But if the pool stays as white and male as it is now, with a decline in their numbers, and more "creaming" from law and medicine, the quality and the diversity in the superintendency will likely decline. No one would benefit from such an outcome.

Hiring from the "pool" will never be successfully more inclusive if we forget the superintendent selection process. According to state executives from the *Superintendents Prepared* survey, superintendent selection is for the most part determined by school boards or state school board associations. In fact, the composition of school boards is more gender friendly. A 1997 study by the National School Boards Association estimates that 44 percent of school board members are women, up seven percentage points from 10 years ago. Minorities represent about 13 percent of school board membership. (These are rough estimates because the survey was limited to members of state school board associations only.) Working with school boards presents an opportunity to expand the pool, looking into non-traditional pipeline positions such as the

elementary school principalship, and thereby also increasing the pool of women and minority candidates during the superintendent selection process. An expanding pool will also alleviate difficulties in hiring superintendents. The vast majority of state executives in the *Superintendents Prepared* study said that compared to three years ago, it is more difficult to identify/hire and retain superintendents today.

Indeed, the school board is a critical group for would be superintendents, and even more so for those already-hired superintendents who want to retain their jobs. The *Superintendents Prepared* survey's state executives also reported that more than half of superintendents lose their jobs because of poor board-superintendent relations. Furthermore, in their estimation, board politics is second only to finance as the most challenging issue faced by superintendents in their state today!

THE INVISIBLE CEO — WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Given the incredibly large human and fiscal resources at their command, as well as the variety of knowledge and skills they need, it is surprising that there is almost no national knowledge base on American school superintendents. Virtually no aspect of America's public schools can be altered without their support. Yet, while they are locally prominent, they are all but invisible nationally, not even an index item in *The Condition of Education, 1998.*

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The superintendency is more stable than the media suggest — the average superintendent has been on the job for about five years, and half of all current superintendents were a superintendent in their previous job. (The best way to become a superintendent is to *be* one!) Most spend their entire career in one state. They are overwhelmingly white and male — increases in women and minority superintendents have been minuscule. Our data indicate 12 percent female and five percent *non*white among superintendents in 1998. Most superintendents tend to be small town, heartland people with conventional ethical and religious views, who believe in hard work for its own sake. Only one third possess a doctoral degree (Glass, 1992). On the other hand, we know that in large urban districts, tenure is, in fact, considerably shorter, and many of these superintendents have high mobility rates and operate in complex environments which require a different set of skills and sensitivities and different perspectives to lead effectively.

The route to the superintendency almost always involves being a teacher, then a principal, then a stint in a central office job before becoming a superintendent. (There are many good reasons for a talented principal to stay on the job rather than becoming a superintendent.) The "pool" from which superintendents are selected is much more diverse by gender, and somewhat more diverse by race — assistant superintendents are 33 percent female and 13 percent minority; central office administrators are 57 percent female and 14 percent minority. Forty-one percent of principals are women, although that breaks down into 53 percent female for elementary principals (who are much less likely to become superintendents), and only 20 percent female for secondary principals (who are much more likely to become superintendents). Seventeen percent of elementary principals are minority and only 12.5 percent of secondary principals are. The pool is much more diverse by gender than by race, suggesting that it might be easier to increase the number of female superintendents than minorities, although increased minority participation is critical.

The most recent data on women and minorities in the superintendency and the current pace of increase (if any) in their representation, leave the nation very far behind in attempting to more closely reflect in public school leadership the gender and racial make-up of its students. This situation can only get worse, given the projections on the numbers of minority students in the schools in 2000 and beyond. The picture is even more bleak when one sees minimal efforts at the state and national level to even keep track of the problem, let alone to try to solve it.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The first task in producing change in virtually anything is the development of a continuously updated and broadly disseminated knowledge base dealing with the thing to be changed. If we wish increased gender and racial diversity in the school superintendency, the first step is to admit that no national strategy to achieve this goal currently exists. While the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has conducted a sample survey each decade since the 1920's (Glass, 1992), the necessary large scale survey research on a more regular basis has not been undertaken. It is clear to the authors that the obvious candidate to undertake such research is the National Center for Education Statistics, whose *Schools and Staffing Survey* provides voluminous detail on teachers and principals, but says not a word about education's CEOs. NCES has the responsibility of providing to Congress a description of the condition of American education, yet not a word currently is written about superintendents. Non-public school data, for both teachers and administrators, are included in SASS in response to political pressure. It may be time for AASA to pursue the same path that the National Association of Independent Schools has pursued with Congress and the NCES. AASA state leaders can be particularly effective in this regard, particularly if AASA "reinvents" its Diversity Committee or puts in place another mechanism to promote action in increasing diversity among America's school executives.

Virtually all superintendents are hired by a local school board — it is probably the most important decision boards make, yet many have never before been through the experience of picking the future leader of their schools. There is a built-in dichotomy between the "Lone Ranger" superintendent who does everything on his/her own, and the "chameleon" superintendent who never reveals his/her views of anything and simply follows the board's cues. Additionally, many superintendents are very different in interviews than they are on the job. A bad selection can make life miserable for board members as well as superintendents, particularly with the emerging view that the superintendent and board should be considered as a "leadership team." State and National School Board Association leaders have developed some excellent training programs for board members dealing with selecting the superintendent, but much more could be done in terms of increasing diversity in the only "pool" that matters — the candidates for the superintendency in each specific district. NSBA and AASA need to be the "point" organizations dealing with diversity in the superintendency, as they are the two groups that are the most affected.

In terms of preparation for the job of superintendent, schools of education should build upon successful non-traditional programs like *Superintendents Prepared* and should expand such programs to include all groups that prepare or certify superintendents. Although many states now have training programs for those wishing to become superintendents, the schools of education that provide the training/certification often do not have the kind of pragmatic, action-oriented program that provides needed skills and knowledge. More mentoring and special field-operated fellowship programs merit support. Universities also do most of the research on the superintendency. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and its member organizations can play a most useful role here, as can the National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals. Specifically,

attempts to broaden and expand the pipeline of prospective superintendents should be supported by efforts to reassess current state certification requirements, which all too often have little or no relation to the current demands of the jobs, particularly in urban school districts.

Efforts to increase and diversify the pool of superintendents also require broader support from influential non-education sectors of the society. Business and political leaders, as well as major foundations, should begin to emphasize not only the need to support higher academic standards, but also the concomitant need to develop the educational leadership so essential to the implementation of reform in the next millennium. Creative efforts to identify, train, and place non-traditional candidates should be encouraged. IEL's President, Michael D. Usdan, says that unless the business and political leadership responsible for much of the recent educational reform movement recognize this leadership crisis in the role of the superintendent, education's CEO, the efforts to improve student achievement cannot be sustained.

Most importantly, someone needs *to own this problem.* We have suggested a few "ownership" strategies above, and more need to be developed. While the authors' job has been to describe current realities, it is abundantly clear to us that progress in increasing the diversity of American education's CEOs can best be described as glacial. Within a few years, the consequences of ignoring this problem will become clear in the form of a declining pool of qualified candidates for the most important job in education. No one will benefit from this troublesome reality.

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APPENDIX
Superintendents Prepared Research Study

GENDER AND RACE SURVEY OF SUPERINTENDENTS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

The *Superintendents Prepared* Consortium, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), conducted a survey of the gender and race of superintendents and school administrators in 1998 in collaboration with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

The survey followed the methodology used by Montenegro in 1993 and Jones and Montenegro in previous years. A survey instrument to collect data on race and gender was sent to chief state school officers. The survey asked for the number of superintendents, assistant/associate/deputy/area superintendents, central office administrators, secondary school principals, middle school principals, and elementary school principals in the state. It asked for the gender of school administrators in these positions by the type of geographic location (urban, suburban, small town/rural) of their school districts or school buildings where they worked.

The survey instrument was sent to chief state school officers in May 1998. Data were received from them or their designated staff in the summer and fall. All data were received by November 1998.

Thirty-nine states responded to the survey. Although this number is less than was hoped for, a majority did respond. Some states had complete data, five said they had none to report, and some had partial counts. The responding states represented large population centers, such as California, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, and Texas. Each of the nine census regions in the country had representation. Data on superintendents were more commonly provided than data for other school administrators. More states also had more gender than race data for every position.

It was also noted that there were difficulties in providing data by geographic location. In some cases data by gender or race were provided without geographic location. This was not surprising, since individual school districts may sometimes include urban, suburban, and rural areas. Thus, it would be difficult to assign a superintendent's geographic location if the school district cannot be identified wholly in one area.

The survey form provided rough descriptions with which to categorize geographic locations. Urban school districts were described as those located in central cities of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). Suburban school districts were defined as those located within areas surrounding a central city within the MSA. Small town/rural school districts were defined as those located within areas outside of an MSA. If the school district served more than one type of geographic area, i.e. suburban and rural, respondents were instructed to define it based on the largest geographic area it covered.

Below are the numbers of reported cases obtained for each position by gender and race:

Position	Reported Cases	No. of States Providing Data
Superintendent		
Gender	9,100	34
Race	8,029	31
Assistant Superintendent		
Gender	4,960	32
Race	4,354	30
Central Office Administrator		
Gender	28,510	30
Race	26,875	27
Secondary School Principal		
Gender	11,828	31
Race	10,879	29
Middle School Principal		
Gender	8,062	27
Race	7,474	25
Elementary School Principal		
Gender	27,440	30
Race	25,578	28

Below is a list of states that provided some data, arranged by region of the country:

New England:	Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island
Mid-Atlantic:	New York, Pennsylvania
South Atlantic:	Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia
East South Central:	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi
East North Central:	Illinois, Wisconsin
West South Central:	Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas
West North Central:	Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota
Mountain:	Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming
Pacific:	Alaska, California, Washington, Hawaii

SURVEY OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Superintendents Prepared conducted another study of the superintendency in 1998 through a survey of state executives of state associations of school administrators. With assistance from AASA, a survey was sent to executives of 50 states, asking for their perceptions of the gender and race of school superintendents in their states, their perceptions of length of tenure and its impact, hiring practices, paths to the superintendency, the superintendent pipeline, challenges they face in the state, and training or development opportunities for women and minorities.

There were 37 state executives who responded to the survey. Data they provided on gender and race representation of superintendents were seen as gross estimates only and were not used in the report. However, their perceptions and observations in other areas were described.

State executives from the following states responded to the survey:

New England:	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island
Mid-Atlantic:	New York, Pennsylvania
South Atlantic:	Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia
East South Central:	Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee
East North Central:	Illinois, Michigan, Ohio
West South Central:	Arkansas, Louisiana
West North Central:	Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
Mountain:	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Utah, Wyoming
Pacific:	Alaska, California, Washington

Superintendents Demographic Study Advisory Committee

• **John Anderson,** New American Schools • **Joan Burnham,** The Austin Project • **Luvern Cunningham,** Leadership Development Associates • **Joan Curcio,** Virginia Tech • **Mary Dilworth,** American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education • **Leo Estrada,** UCLA School of Public Policy • **Libia S. Gil,** Superintendent, Chula Vista, CA • **Lynne Glassman,** Former Senior Associate Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators • **LaRuth Gray,** New York University • **Lois Harrison-Jones,** President-Elect, National Alliance of Black School Educators • **Gerry House,** Superintendent, Memphis, TN • **Marlene Holayter,** Superintendent, Shoreline, WA • **William B. Ingram,** Past President, National School Boards Association • **Barbara Jackson,** Fordham University • **Dale G. Jensen,** Minnesota Association of School Administrators • **Dan Kasprzyk,** National Center for Education Statistics • **Larry Leverett,** Superintendent, Plainfield, NJ • **Robert Peterkin,** Harvard University • **Judith V. Wilcox,** Former Superintendent, Pleasantville, NJ •

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Action Steps

What NSBA is prepared to do to address this problem:

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) and its state associations recognize that the significant under-representation of women and minorities in the superintendency is a matter of concern. When we assist and advise boards in superintendent searches, we will continue to extend our reach as widely as possible to assure that boards have a diverse and qualified pool of applicants when seeking a chief executive. Further, the NSBA Federation strongly believes in the concept of the leadership team — the school board and superintendent working together to increase student achievement. We are committed to strengthening our development programs in the area of board-superintendent relationships in order to reduce turnover and provide administrative stability.

Anne Bryant, Executive Director, NSBA

What AASA is prepared to do to address this problem:

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) can promote administrative internships and mentoring programs. Since many superintendents come to the top spot via the principalship, the way to increase diversity within the superintendency is to select talented and energized women and minority teachers to work with respected principals. Likewise, selected principals would work with experienced superintendents. Such a program will increase the diversity of the pool of administrators qualified for the superintendency.

Paul D. Houston, Executive Director, AASA

Other key players who need to get involved:

Indeed, a persuasive case can be made that unless the influential business and political leaders who have driven the education reform movement in recent years begin to pay more attention and recognize more explicitly the leadership crisis in education, encouraging current efforts to improve the enterprise and enhance student achievement will not be sustained or successful. In other words, the crucial leadership role of school superintendent, education's CEO, must become more visible and better understood by all segments of the society.

Michael D. Usdan, President, IEL

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